Rural District of Culmstock,

DEVON.

Annual Report of Medical Officer of Heath,

For the Year ending December 31st., 1911.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Annual Report for the year 1911.

VITAL STATISTICS. Since my last annual report the results of the 1911 census have been published and my figures in this report are calculated on that basis. This census shows that the population of your district is 3,346 as compared with 3,336 in 1901. The populations of the different parishes with their variations are as follows:—Burlescombe 693, an increase of 16; Clayhidon 457, a decrease of 6; Culmstock 811, an increase of 45; Hemyock 884, an increase of 60; and Holcombe Rogus 501 a decrease of 106.

There are 783 inhabited houses as against 752 in 1901. The average occupiers per house are 4.27 and there are 6¼ acres per person.

The district is entirely an agricultural one and there are no occupations carried on which can be considered prejudicial to the health of the inhabitants. The amount of Poor Law Relief has considerably decreased since the coming into force of 'Old Age Pensions'. There is no Hospital in your District and Hospital and other forms of gratuitous Medical Relief are roughly speaking only utilised in surgical and serious cases.

Births. During the year 62 births, 30 male and 32 female, were registered. All were legitimate. This gives a rate of 18.5 per 1,000 as against 20.3 for 1910. This is the lowest rate recorded for the 17 years that I have been Medical Officer of Health. The steady decline in the Birth Rate gives one food for serious thought.

Deaths. 37 deaths occured in people belonging to your district although only 34 were registered therein. This gives a rate of 11.05 as against 13.8 per 1,000 in 1910. Of these deaths 5 occurred in children under one year, 1 between 1 and 2 years, 1 between 2 and 5 years, 3 between 5 and 15 years, 2 between 15 and 25 years, 1 between 25 and 45 years, 8 between 45 and 65 years, and 16 above 65 years.

33 were certified and 4 uncertified. Causes of death:—Diphtheria 1, Pulmonary tuberculosis 1, Cancer 5, Bronchitis 4, Bronchopneumonia 1, Pneumonia 1, Appendicitis 1, Violence 3, Suicide 1, Other causes 19.

The Infantile Mortality of 5 gives a rate of 80.6 per 1,000 births registered. The rate for last year was 92.1.

Vital Statistics of Separate Localities.

Parish.	Population.	Births Registered.	Deaths at all Ages.	Deaths under One Year.
Culmstock .	811	13	8	0
Hemyock ..	884	13	15	0
Clayhidon ..	457	15	2	1
Holcombe Rogus	501	9	6	2
Burlescombe ..	693	12	6	2

Clayhidon with the lowest population has the most births and the least deaths.

The Water Supply is entirely from wells and on the whole is good and there is freedom from waterborne disease. I have officially analysed 11 samples of water during the year, and as a result classified 5 as good, 2 as suspicious, and 4 as bad. Two of the latter are made up of second examinations of the same water.

Rivers and Streams. The Culm runs through one part of your district and in its course receives very little serious pollution.

Drainage and Sewerage. During the year the Millmoor Sewer at Culmstock has been completed and most of the connections have now been made. The drainage of the Council School Hemyock has been completely reorganized and now empties in the main sewer which was extended for the purpose, and the closets are provided with a constant supply of water for flushing purposes. Alterations have been effected to provide for more efficient irrigation of the sewage outfalling into Allermoor meadow on the South side of Culmstock.

Closet Accommodation. Where there are sewers as in the villages there are a good number of water closets, but otherwise and in scattered houses there are mostly either cesspits or earth closets. In cases where there are unsatisfactory Closets these are gradually being replaced and I am sure that there has been much improvement in this respect during the last few years.

Scavenging is entirely carried out by private occupiers.

Sanitary Inspections of your district have been carried out under the Housing and Town Planning Act and are causing the remedying of many defects. During the year 142 record cards of houses inspected have been laid before you, in 52 of these no action was considered necessary, 70 statutory notices were sent out, 1 regarding water supply and 23 concerning other points arising under the Act. The result of these notices is that 52 are reported as remedied, 19 as in progress, and in 22 the work is not yet carried out or time not expired. The above figures only represent a part of the work done, as often after the serving of the notices several visits have to be made by your Inspector before the work is satisfactorily completed. In all cases where your Inspector on his preliminary inspection finds defects I make a point of myself visiting the premises before the cases come to your notice. The result of all this cannot fail to be beneficial to the condition of the houses of the working classes, but at present I fear it also presses rather hardly on owners of cottage property.

Schools. All the Elementary Schools in your district have been inspected during the year and in three cases defects have been found and remedied. Dr. Adkins, the County Medical Officer of Health is also County School Medical Officer. The school inspections in this district have been made by the assistant School Medical Officer, Dr. L. Tosswill. These inspections have resulted in the bringing under notice and treatment of many physical defects in the school children which would otherwise have passed unnoticed. This has especially applied to defects of vision and also enlarged tonsils and adenoids. In the middle of the year the Council School at Hemyock was closed owing to the prevalence of Diphtheria.

Food. Milk Supply. You have no registered dairies in your district. All sellers claim exemption from registration on the ground that they only supply milk for the convenience of their neighbours and workpeople. As I have in previous years said the condition of some cowsheds and the conditions under which much of the milking is done leave much to be desired from the sanitary point of view, but until the law lays down some definite standard and regulations sufficiently succinct to prevent evasion of registration it is a very difficult matter to deal with satisfactorily.

The Bakehouses and Slaughterhouses have been inspected and found satisfactory. No food has been condemned and the condition of places where food is prepared, stored or exposed for sale have given no cause for complaint.

Housing of the working classes is not on the whole bad and I do not think there is much need for more houses. Only two cases of overcrowding have been reported during the year and they have been remedied. The air-space round houses and cleanliness of surroundings on the whole is good. In several cases we have had to complain of the nearness of rubbish heaps to dwelling-houses and people do not seem to realize how these heaps are the probable sources of disease especially in the summer months. Your Building Bye-Laws continue to do much good in the control they give you over the sanitation of new houses erected in your district.

Outworkers.—Your inspector and myself inspected the rooms occupied by some 31 lacemenders at Burlescombe and Holcombe Rogus and found no cause for complaint.

Isolation Hospital.—At present you have no such hospital in your district and the only two cases that have been sent away for several years have been taken to the Tiverton Isolation Hospital Pending the time when a joint Isolation Hospital may be provided with some adjoining districts I think it would be well to have some definite agreement, if possible, with Tiverton so to be prepared in any emergency.

Bacteriological Examinations are undertaken by the County Council and are of very great assistance in the public health work. During 1911, 108 swabs were examined for diphtheria with the result that 20 were found positive and 88 negative; 2 specimens of blood were examined for enteric fever both being found negative; 3 specimens of sputum were examined for tubercle and all found negative.

Prevalence of Infectious Diseases.—Diphtheria has been prevalent during the year at Hemyock, 13 cases having been notified and in spite of all precautions taken it is very difficult to entirely stamp the disease out. Most of the cases have occurred among scholars at the Council School; twice the school has been disinfected and closed for a period; every child about whom the head teacher has the slightest suspicion is reported to me. I then examine the case and send a swab for examination. In December with the kind assistance of the County School Medical Officer I examined the throats of all the scholars and swabs were taken from every throat which appeared in any way abnormal. This resulted in the examination of over 30 swabs and by this means one unsuspected case was discovered and isolated. I found that the pens and pencils were used promiscuously, this has been stopped and I have advised that the books be destroyed, a fresh set procured, and that these be kept to the individual users. The water in the school well which was found to be polluted is prohibited for use.

18 cases of measles (Culmstock 8, Hemyock 6, Burlescombe 3, and Holcombe 1), and 1 case of whooping cough (Burlescombe) were also notified.

Influenza was prevalent in the spring, but was of a mild type and resulted in no death.

Tuberculosis is not common in your district and I have received no report of pulmonary tuberculosis.

Midwives.—There are now only two registered midwives practising in your district and they have been inspected by me and reported on to the County Council. No case of puerpural fever has been reported and no death occurred connected with childbirth. Much ignorance still prevails as to the feeding of infants and no doubt accounts for some of the infant mortality. I think it would be a good thing if popular lectures could be given by some qualified woman in the villages on the proper care and feeding of infants if they were made interesting and the cottage mothers induced to attend.

Epidemic Poliomyelitis During last summer the county was visited by an epidemic of this disease and it is be feared that next summer may be marked by a repetition of the outbreak. The Local Government Board have issued a most instructive report founded on the investigations of the outbreak on the spot by Dr. Reece (their inspector) and others bringing the information as to causation, prevention and treatment up to date. You have wisely made this disease and Cerebro-Spinal Meningitis notifiable and this will assist public health authorities in following the course of any future epidemic, and it is to be hoped aid in finding out the cause (possibly a preventible one) of this dread disease which when it spares life only too often leaves the sufferer permanently paralysed in one or more limbs. One case occurred in your district before the disease was made notifiable and fortunately resulted in complete recovery.

Disinfection is carried out in your district by your inspector.

I desire once more to testify to the ready help I always receive from your Inspector in my work.

I am, Gentlemen,

Obediently yours,

W. HORTON DATE,

Medical Officer of Health.